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Unclassified Summary of Public Positions on INF

West European media reaction to President Reagan's proposal to meet with Andropov to sign a global INF accord has been very positive. Some papers see it as evidence of greater US flexibility; others note that the US has regained the initiative while not backtracking from its bargaining position. []

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UK

The British press gave wide, generally favorable coverage to the Vice President's Berlin speech. The Guardian remarked on the Vice President's "skillful performance" in Berlin, while The Times termed his speech "tough and uncompromising." The Times also noted that the summit offer "is a clear attempt to rally the United States' European Allies around its policy . . . and to demonstrate American sincerity." []

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West
Germany

Kohl publicly has urged the Soviets to accept the President's offer to a summit "with an open hand." Foreign Minister Genscher also lent support to the summit call. Vogel welcomed the offer to meet with Andropov but added that he does not regard the offer as a counterproposal to Soviet positions at the INF talks. In an editorial, Bonner Rundschau (pro-CDU) claimed that disarmament experts in Bonn believe the Bush trip will lead to "a new American move" in Geneva. The Sueddeutsche Zeitung (independent) thought that there is movement in the US position, citing Bush's reference to the zero option as a "moral position." The paper saw no difference between this and Kohl's view that the zero option is an "optimal goal." []

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France

Cheysson yesterday announced in London that he and Pym "see eye-to-eye" on INF and welcome the Vice President's statements. The state-supervised radio France-Inter yesterday described President Reagan's open letter as a "spectacular move" demonstrating new US flexibility. Le Monde observed in an editorial that the US summit proposal is nothing new but has "universal and spectacular value" from a public relations standpoint. []

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Italy

The centrist Corriere Della Sera characterized the summit proposal as "a new, spectacular US initiative" that is both "flexible and firm." The left-leaning Repubblica concluded that President Reagan "relaunched the US initiative on disarmament in a spectacular way." []

STAT

The
Netherlands

We have not received Dutch media reaction to the US summit proposal. On the Bush trip, the conservative De Telegraaf cited the absence of any new US initiative and observed that "George Bush is an ambassador of the heaviest calibre" but "it is a disappointment . . . that he is coming without any new proposals." The left-of-center NRC Handelsblad pointed to increasing sentiment within the US State Department for a "new approach to INF." []

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USSR

In an "impromptu" interview in Pravda yesterday, Andropov adopted a "more in sorrow than in anger" tone in lamenting the President's "open letter." He accused the Reagan administration of not wanting an accord with the USSR, repeated earlier Soviet proposals, and warned that if US missiles are deployed, the USSR would answer in a "due way." Andropov also implied that the President's offer is unacceptable because it has strings attached, and he generally deplored the absence of US "sincerity." []

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